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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASMARA 000858

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [KVPR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [CVIS](#) [ASEC](#) [KHLS](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: ERITREA: HOST GOVERNMENT PRACTICES: INFORMATION COLLECTION, SCREENING AND SHARING

REF: SECSTATE 133921

Classified By: CDA Jennifer A. McIntyre, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) In response to reftel request for information regarding host government practices on information collection, screening and sharing, post provides the following responses. Answers are keyed to headers provided in reftel, paragraph 6. In addition, post advises that bilateral relations between Eritrea and the United States are at an all-time low. There is no bilateral cooperation on any issue and the Government of the State of Eritrea routinely refuses to discuss issues, policies or practices with post. The GSE operates a single-party state and restricts civil liberties and personal freedoms; there is no dissent in Eritrea. The GSE routinely arrests and detains its own citizens without judicial due process. Anyone considered a threat to the current regime is at risk of detention. The GSE governs without regard to its own laws and proclamations, often implementing practices that have no foundation in law or precedence. Power and decision-making stay in the hands of only a few people, who operate without transparency.

¶2. (SBU) A. Watchlisting: The GSE does maintain a watchlist of an unknown number of records administered by the Office of National Security and the Immigration Office, both of which are under the auspices of the Office of the President. Post believes that the list contains names of both international and Eritrean criminals, terrorists and those considered a threat to Eritrea's national security. The information is retained in a computer database that is reportedly centrally maintained and updated. Post has no further details about the watchlist.

¶3. (C) Traveler Information Collection: The GSE collects the standard information upon arrival by air, land and sea into Eritrea. There are no commercial domestic flights within Eritrea. The Immigration Office, in collaboration with the Office of National Security, collects the information. Post does not know the GSE policies on information sharing; they do not share routine information with the resident foreign Missions. We believe that the GSE would only share information if the regime believed such action to be in its interest. Post believes the GSE collects the Passenger Name Record (PNR) on all incoming flights and uses this information for intelligence and law enforcement purposes. The GSE is party to the general maritime and aviation treaties. Post is unaware if the GSE has any existing treaties to share PNR data.

¶4. (SBU) Border Control and Screening: Post is unaware if the GSE uses software to screen travelers of security interest. Post does not believe the GSE uses electronic

tracking systems. No computers are in evidence at the immigration counters at the Asmara airport, the main point of entry. The GSE does use the VIP lounge and other means to allow individuals to enter Eritrea without proceeding through the standard immigration procedures. In addition, post does not know if the passengers of private planes are required to proceed through immigration. Border control officials operate under the command of the Office of National Security and are directed by high-ranking officials. The border control officials do have the authority to question any individual who enters Eritrea based on suspicion or direct command. Immigration officials will question individuals who arrive in Eritrea without visas or permission to enter the country. In some cases, Immigration would deny entry or detain the individual, in other cases National Security would detain the individual.

1D. (SBU) Biometric Collection: There is no biometric collection at the points of entries. The GSE does not fingerprint travelers to Eritrea. The GSE does maintain an extensive manual, rolled fingerprint collection of its citizenry and others arrested by the police or military. Post believes this fingerprint collection is not/not computerized or digitized in any way and is maintained predominantly by the police. Post does not know if the fingerprint programs in place are NIST, INT-I, EFTS, UK1 or RTID compliant, but believes they are not.

1E. (SBU) Passports: The GSE issues machine-readable passports, however these do not contain biometric information. Replacement passports are usually full validity issuance and do not appear to be different in any way from a regularly issued passport. In a few instances, post observed replacement passports issued for a limited validity, however

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these were unusual. Post is unaware of any special regulations/procedures for dealing with "habitual" losers of passports or bearers who have reported their passports stolen multiple times.

1F. (C) Fraud Detection: The GSE has strict consequences for the production of fraudulent documents and cooperates with post on identifying fraudulent documents on an as-needed basis. The cooperation is extremely limited. For example, post has been unable to obtain meetings with police contacts to discuss fraud. The GSE does not appear to be interested in fraudulent school records and other such consular documents. In Eritrea, it is easy to obtain a genuinely issued document with false information, such as birth, marriage and death certificates and some individuals have obtained genuine passports with false information. The GSE appears to be unconcerned with the ease of obtaining such documents. The GSE also issues Eritrean diplomatic, official and regular passports to non-Eritreans, including Somalis, Sudanese and other whose political movements the GSE supports. In the past this has included members of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, Oromiya Liberation Movement, Sudan Liberation Movement, Somali Council of Islamic courts and others. This practice led the Egyptian Government to require all Eritrean diplomatic passport holders obtain visas prior to traveling to Egypt.

1G. (SBU) Privacy and Data Security: Post does not know the GSE's policies concerning records related to the questioning, detention or removal of individuals encountered at points of entry into the country nor how those records are stored, and for how long. Post does not know whether the GSE restricts collection or use of sensitive data. The GSE has no obligation to provide notice to the public on the implementation of new databases of records. Post does not believe there are any laws relating to security features for government computer systems that hold personally identifying information. Post does not believe there are any rules covering an individual's ability to access data that homeland security agencies hold about them. Moreover, if such rules

exist, Post does not believe the GSE would honor such laws.
A non-citizen/resident could ask the GSE for the data,
however as mentioned previously the GSE would not honor such
a request.

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